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Investigators Looking into Series of Nantucket Motor Vehicle Arsons

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, acting Nantucket Fire Chief Mark C. McDougall and Nantucket Police Chief William Pittman announced they are continuing to investigate a number of suspicious motor vehicle fires on Nantucket. State Fire Marshal Coan said, "The investigative team is continuing to investigate other incendiary motor vehicle fires and we hope the island community will come forward with any information that may help them."

Acting Fire Chief Mark McDougall said, "We are asking anyone with information about these motor vehicle fires to confidentially call the Arson Hotline – 1-800-682-9229." The Arson Hotline is part of the Arson Watch Reward Program, which offers rewards of up to \$5,000 for information that leads to solving arson cases. The Arson Watch Reward Program is sponsored by the property and casualty underwriting companies in Massachusetts.

The investigative team also encourages people to call the State Police Nantucket Office at (508) 228-0706 or the Nantucket Police Department's Detectives Unit at (508) 228-1212, or the Police Department's confidential Tip Line at (508) 228-3626.

One arrest has already been made as part of this on-going investigation. Christopher Metcalfe, age 53, was arrested for burning a new motor vehicle on October 4 at the Nantucket Town Dock. The Cape and Islands District Attorney's Office is prosecuting the case.

According to statistics from the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS), motor vehicle arsons have decreased 97% from 5,116 in 1987 to 176 in 2005. Coan said, "Two things have contributed to this decline: aggressive fire investigation and the Burned/Recovered Motor Vehicle Reporting Law passed in 1987." The law requires owners of burned motor vehicles to complete and sign a report that must also be signed by a fire official from the department in the community where the fire occurred.